

Section IV

Introduction

This Field Office Technical Guide is prepared primarily for use by NRCS personnel, it is available for anyone having an interest in, or a responsibility for, natural resource conservation activities. It is designed to primarily be used by technically trained people who are assisting landowners and users, land managers and responsible officials of units of government, and other decision-makers to plan, apply and maintain appropriate conservation practices.

This section is an alphabetical list of conservation practices used by the field office, followed by practice standards. It may also include references and documentation requirements for the individual practices.

Practice standards establish the minimum level of acceptable quality for planning, designing, installing, operating and maintaining conservation practices.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

This section includes the local standards for conservation practices commonly used to improve natural resources with regard to soil, water, air, plants, and animals plus humans (SWAPA+H). The local standards are to be equal to or more rigorous than the national standard. Each NRCS Field Office localizes the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) to its geographic area and establishes quality requirements for applying conservation practices within its area of responsibility.

NRCS is the lead USDA agency for providing conservation technical assistance and planning on privately owned lands. Various Federal, State, and local laws passed during the last several years have increased cooperation between NRCS and its partners that are concerned with conservation and protection of natural resources. Other government and private organizations use NRCS FOTG material to assist or supplement their conservation efforts. In addition, Internet access brings NRCS practice standards to a larger audience.

Practice standards need to be reviewed and maintained continuously to stay current with rapid changes in technology and to ensure that they address multiple resources. Reviews ensure those standards:

- Provide timely incorporation of new technologies.
- Address multiple resource concerns.
- Are consistent in format and content.
- Enhance interagency cooperation with regard to development of standards.
- Account for the varied conservation activities expected of NRCS in the future.

As outlined in the 450 GM Part 401.01, all employees are responsible for assuring that conservation practice standards include up-to-date information and technology. National policy and the practice standards are developed for the protection of the landowner, conservation contractors, Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) employees, and NRCS employees. When a practice is installed according to criteria specified in the practice standard and the plans and specifications:

- The landowner receives a conservation product that solves the apparent resource problem.
- The contractor understands his/her responsibility in providing a quality job on the ground and is not required to warranty a product beyond the requirements of the standard.
- The NRCS is protected by being assured that its employees are working within the scope of their employment.